

**STATEMENT OF MARIANNE HORINKO,  
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U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
BEFORE THE  
COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS**

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) role in domestic terrorism preparedness and, more specifically, the Agency's role in protection of the nation's water resources.

The tragic events of September 11, 2001, have raised valid concerns over our nation's vulnerability to terrorist attack. As a nation, we are scrutinizing our efforts to prepare for and to prevent terrorist events. Realizing that we must always remain vigilant to new threats and must always be ready to respond, the Agency welcomes the opportunity this hearing offers to examine these issues.

My testimony covers four major areas: EPA's role in counter-terrorism preparedness and response before and after September 11; a specific discussion of drinking water protection related to the September 11 attack; EPA's overall protection of our nation's drinking water; and the critical federal coordination needed to meet the counter-terrorism challenges ahead.

**The Federal Partners and NGO's: A Unique Partnership**

The National Response Team (NRT), established by the National Contingency Plan (NCP), consists of 16 Federal agencies with responsibilities, interests, and expertise in various aspects of

emergency response to pollution incidents. The EPA serves as chair and the Coast Guard serves as vice chair of the NRT. This partnership includes such Federal agencies as the ATSDR (Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry), DOD (Department of Defense), DOE (Department of Energy), FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation), FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) and key non-governmental organizations.

### **September 11, 2001 -- Emergency Response Actions**

Our Federal partnership sprung into action on September 11, 2001. Before the second plane had struck the World Trade Center in Manhattan, EPA headquarters had already begun coordination with our Region 2 office to address the crash of the first plane. Ten minutes later, our EPA headquarters had linked all of our east coast regional offices to begin coordination and support of the New York response effort. EPA's Emergency Response Program was present on site in New York, Virginia, and Pennsylvania within hours of the four plane crashes.

Throughout the response effort, EPA worked in coordination with our federal partners to monitor and protect human health and the environment from potential hazards associated with the three crash sites. At both The World Trade Center and the Pentagon, EPA provided monitoring for various air contaminants. For example, EPA and other federal, state and city agencies have taken literally thousands of samples of dust, air, drinking water, stormwater runoff and river sediments in and around the World Trade Center site. We've tested for the presence of pollutants such as asbestos, lead, volatile organic compounds, dioxin, benzene, metals, PCBs and other chemicals and substances that could pose a threat to the public and workers at the site. Fortunately, EPA and OSHA have found no

evidence of any significant public health hazard to residents, visitors, or workers beyond the immediate World Trade Center area. And despite recent press accounts which suggest otherwise, these findings have not changed. In fact, environmental conditions off the site have improved in recent weeks.

In addition to our monitoring activities, at the World Trade Center, EPA assisted in debris removal, and cleanup of dust and debris from the streets using vacuum trucks. EPA has provided rescue workers and others onsite with protective gear and health and safety recommendations for the difficult conditions on site. We have also set up washing stations for response workers at Ground Zero and vehicles and heavy equipment departing the Zone are being washed down prior to departure. Signs informing rescuers of the need to wear protective gear are posted throughout the washing stations.

### **EPA's Anthrax Response**

I want to bring to your attention the increasing number of requests the Agency has received to provide assessment, sampling, and cleanup assistance at anthrax-contaminated buildings across the country. The dilemma we face is that the Superfund statutory language that allows us to respond to these biological releases also limits our ability to recover our response costs. To the extent these activities will continue, they will have an impact on our Superfund cleanup activities later in the year in certain parts of the country.

### **September 11, 2001-- Water Protection**

Regarding water concerns associated with the crash site in Manhattan, EPA collected and tested drinking water at several distribution points. Following several days of heavy rain in New York, we collected water samples from storm sewers and surface runoff to determine if potential contamination from the World Trade Center site was entering the Hudson or East rivers. All samples of drinking water, which were tested for a wide range of contaminants, had levels below federal standards. Analysis of runoff following heavy rain on September 14 did show some elevated levels of PCBs and other pollutants. Follow-up sampling on several occasions found levels back to those normally found in area waters.

### **Water Protection Task Force**

Recognizing the need to ensure appropriate coordination of water security activities, EPA has established a Water Protection Task Force that will guide efforts on long term drinking water infrastructure protection and wastewater treatment infrastructure protection.

### **Governor Whitman announced some specific projects to Protect America's Drinking Water :**

- The Administration has requested \$34.5 million as part of the terrorism supplemental appropriations for support of vulnerability assessments for drinking water systems and \$5 million for state grants for drinking water counterterrorism coordinators to work with EPA and drinking water systems.
- With EPA support, the Sandia National Laboratory of the Department of Energy in partnership with the American Water Works Association Research Foundation is developing a "tool kit" to

assist drinking water systems in conducting vulnerability assessments and identifying remedial action.

- C We expect training on this resource to be available later this month. As an interim measure, EPA has disseminated a fact sheet that outlines measures utilities can take immediately to protect their drinking water supplies. Issued through the state drinking water program managers, this document should now be in the hands of every public water system.
- C As this "tool kit" is being developed, the American Water Works Association Research Foundation is drafting additional, more detailed training materials that will provide step-by-step guidance to drinking water utilities on conducting vulnerability assessments, identifying remedial actions and strengthening their emergency operation plans. Formal training sessions that will take utility security officials through the first steps of their vulnerability assessments will begin in December.
- C Training others to conduct vulnerability assessments will be an integral component of this effort. Consequently the Agency envisions that a significant cadre of professionals will be available to assist systems in doing these vulnerability assessments.

These activities focus on enhancing preparedness of water utilities; other projects will bolster the existing methods for responding to emergency situations, including terrorist acts. Currently, a drinking water utility would activate its existing emergency response plan with its local police and state emergency officials. If needed, these provide for shutting down the system, notifying the public of any emergency steps they might need to take (e.g., boiling water) and providing alternate sources of water.

EPA's extensive network of expert emergency response personnel can be dispatched to the scene immediately to support local communities.

### **EPA's Counter-Terrorism Activities**

As EPA continues to strengthen its counter-terrorism (CT) program by building on the existing National Response System for hazardous materials (hazmat) prevention, preparedness, and response, the Agency is involved in a variety of activities with federal, state, and local officials that include:

- C      Requesting \$5.5 million in the terrorism supplemental appropriations to establish and equip a West Coast response team.
- C      In the ten EPA regions, the Agency's first responders are the On-Scene Coordinators (or OSCs). The OSCs have been actively involved with local, state, and federal authorities in preparing for and responding to threats of terrorism. EPA's OSCs, located throughout the United States, have broad response authority and a proven record of success in responding rapidly emergency situations.
- C      Providing expertise in performing off-site monitoring, extent of contamination surveys, working with health officials to establish safe cleanup levels conducting protective cleanup actions.
- C      Communicating technical information or health data to affected citizens is essential for a successful Federal response to an act of terrorism that involves a release of chemical, biological, or radioactive material. EPA brings unique capabilities and experience to the response process.
- C      Expanding work with State Emergency Response Commissions (SERCs) and Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPCs) to develop emergency response plans for hazardous

materials releases to encourage them to incorporate terrorism response issues into their existing emergency plans.

C Working closely with other federal agencies to refine interagency response plans for terrorist attacks.

C Conducting forensic evidence collection on nonmilitary industrial chemicals in the event of an eco-terrorism event by EPA's National Enforcement Investigations Center (NEIC) and training state, local, and federal personnel in this type of work.

### **Conclusion**

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I would like to emphasize that the Administrator, Governor Whitman, has made very clear to the entire Agency that there is no higher priority than ensuring that EPA's mission to protect the environment and public health is a broad umbrella that encompasses homeland security. The expertise and experience the Agency has developed over 31 years is poised to assist and support the hard work Governor Ridge and this Congress will be doing.

Clearly, the Administrator is adamant that EPA's efforts to help secure the safety and integrity of America's water supply and infrastructure must be undertaken with great speed, energy, and attention. Deadlines that were established before September 11th for such action are no longer appropriate. We have no time to waste in completing this work and we intend to devote the resources necessary to make certain that it is done quickly and that it is done properly.

Governor Whitman, myself, and our professionals throughout EPA welcome the opportunity to work with you, your colleagues in the Congress, your professional staff, and with Governor Ridge and

the Office of Homeland Security to protect and preserve the health and well being of every American citizen.